



# Highland Cattle Club of Wales Newsletter

Issue 43 - 2009 Show Edition



Annie May receives the HCCW Trophy at Lampeter Show

[www.hccw.org.uk](http://www.hccw.org.uk)

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of HCCW

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Photos: Mike McCombe

## EDITORIAL

As far as I am aware, this is the first edition of the HCCW newsletter not to have been produced by the valiant Annie May. With Annie taking another step towards a well earned 'retirement', the baton has, for the time being at least, been handed to Liz McCombe and me: Liz in the role of newshound and me as editor. However, Annie has still contributed many articles for this issue, and I hope she will continue to do so - it would be awfully quiet without her!

This is a bumper issue and I would like to thank everyone who has contributed material. If you would like to submit anything for the next issue, or have any comments on the sort of things you would like to read about, then please contact Liz or me.

*Mo Morgan*

## EVENTS DIARY



# Highland Cattle Club of Wales AGM & Christmas Dinner

Saturday 5th December 2009

At The Stockman's Accommodation,  
The Royal Welsh Showground

All members most welcome ~ further details to follow

# Southern Autumn Show & Sale

of Pedigree & Commercial Highland Cattle

Worcester Livestock Market, Saturday 31st October 2009

01905 769770 ~ [www.mccartneys.co.uk/agriculture/pedigree-sales](http://www.mccartneys.co.uk/agriculture/pedigree-sales)

## FROM THE CHAIR

The TB testing regime in Wales is more rigorous than ever: vets have obviously been instructed to be careful with their measurements and err on the side of caution. The flushing out of odd highlanders continues, and people with mobile crushes are in demand. I'm told the wet weather has meant far more fluke than usual in some areas as well. Haymaking has been a bit haphazard, but most seems to be in now.

I have enjoyed meeting other members at various events during the summer. The marquee at the Royal Welsh Show meant we were able to promote the breed effectively, even to commercial farmers, and in these times of credit crunch there was real interest in cattle that are cheap to run, hardy and don't require a vet on call 24/7. Thank you to all members who contributed towards the marquee this year.

I hope you have been able to access the website, and I apologise for not keeping the events diary up to date. As Julian Ford said, it would be useful to be able to refer to it for dates etc without having to look up old newsletters etc. I will try harder!

I look forward to the Christmas Dinner and I hope to see you at Builth on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> December. Come and stay in the Stockman's Accommodation, or bring your caravan or tent (and an ability to brave the weather come what may), it's all good fun!!

*Liz McCombe*

P.S.

When she came south in March for the HCCW event, Liz Shaw brought a calf colostrum booster supplement. Made by Osmonds, it comes in a bottle to which warm water is added, the bottle is shaken and the liquid fed to the calf within 4 or 5 hours of birth. This supplement can only be ordered by the dozen, but if we can get a few people interested it may be worth ordering a case to divide amongst members. It does cost £9 per bottle, but it is very effective if a calf is not suckling well in the first few hours of life. If you are interested, please let me know.

## SHOW REPORTS

### Three Counties Show

A more friendly show it would be hard to find; and that is from a frequenter of the RWAS which is usually about as helpful and friendly as it's possible to be. The participants always make a big difference and the welcome we received from the regulars was fantastic. There was a fabulous turn out of 27 cattle and they made an excellent impression in the ring. Thanks to Terry and Annie Perkins, the Handleys and the Tedbury's for their lovely welcome to Geoff and me.



*Duncan and Angela Handley with chef Felice Tocchini*

A lot goes on at this delightful show and this year was no exception. Duncan Handley introduced the public to his Fold of Highlanders with a delightful film and presentation of the Gilden Vale Fold and a cookery demonstration by a top chef. From where I was sitting this was interspersed at intervals by muffled exclamations of "bugger" from our revered Chair, bless her, as with great difficulty, she tried to focus on moving subjects and take photographs for the website and the Newsletter. The beef, cooked to perfection was utterly heavenly. The chef commented on the fact that you could tell grass fed beef by the way it cooked, and the beef provided by Gilden Vale and Great House Folds was of an outstanding quality and flavour.

*Annie May*

## Royal Welsh Show

This year saw Highland Cattle attending in record numbers. 27 cattle were due to attend, as it turned out Nineteen animals were on show, still an excellent turnout. Gilden Vale, The May, Celyn Folds, Blaen Gorlech, Grwhyd and Rowston Folds. There were some well known faces present too: Rich Turner, Robin Chilton and Will and Maggie Thompson who came for their annual visit (missed last year because of bluetongue). Heather Baxter, our newly married HCS secretary, brought promotional material to be displayed in the HCS which was valiantly manned (and womaned!) by the McCombes. Our judge was Ian McKay from Cnoc.

For the most part the RWAS was unrelievedly wet but the rain held off for the Highland Cattle showing on Monday which was fine with a brisk wind. This little wind played a certain amount of havoc with the beasts on show. The Long Horns and the British Whites in the next door ring were decidedly frisky as were a number of Highlanders; some even getting away from their handlers. But it was still a wonderful spectacle to see so many in the Show ring at one time. Competition was brisk and to cap it all the Highland Teams were put in 6th place in the twos with the Gilden Vale pair, and in 5th place in the threes; a new high for the breed.

As usual it was a highly enjoyable show with all of us getting together in the evening to eat, drink and tell tall tales as usual. Thanks to Duncan and Angie Handley for a delicious and generous celebration buffet supper on Monday night and to the indefatigable Liz and Mike McCombe who travelled in every day from Chepstow to be on hand in the HCS marquee to minister to all comers, even those who were palpably only interested in cups of tea!

*Annie May*



## **The Royal Welsh Show 2009 (A view from the tent)**

Actually, the “tent” was a rather nice marquee on a corner overlooking the cattle ring, with electricity (and sometimes running water across the floor later in the week). It was further improved with the contents of Hazel’s Tardis van, from which came all kinds of home comforts as well as merchandise.

There were nineteen highlanders at Builth this year, so classes on Monday took a while and judging wasn’t easy for Ian McKay. However, with the difficult decisions made on the first day, everyone was able to relax a bit from then on. In the evening, Angie and Duncan Handley kindly provided supper for everyone and we dined on superb salads and cold cuts before falling into bed exhausted.

By Tuesday the tent was well into the swing of things and we fielded numerous enquiries about Highland cattle from old and young, professional and amateur alike. I learnt to be particularly careful of young lads of about 12 years old, approaching with a farmer father in attendance. Father remained silent whilst the boys asked all kinds of technical questions about dead weights, ease of calving, cross breeding and costs of upkeep etc. They said they had been told that if they were interested in highlanders, they had to do the research, and boy, did they put us through our paces! It was refreshing and heartening to see young people interested in the cattle, hopefully it bodes well for the future.

On Wednesday the river running across the floor abated, but enquiries continued. There was a definite shift away from people collecting pretty pictures and asking about keeping a Highland cow on the smallholding they dreamt of buying and a noticeable increase in interest from farmers considering Highlanders and Highland Crosses as an alternative to sheep on upland grazing land. Many farmers were interested in crossing highland dams with almost any kind of bull, and photos of cross breeds were earnestly studied. One Cumbrian farmer arrived with a tale of being left a fold in settlement of a bad debt. He didn’t quite know what to do with them, so he put them on a scrubby piece of land on the hill and fed them a few bales of hay in the winter months. By May, he was amazed and delighted to see the calves appearing. As he said, he would not have believed cattle could be so easy and cheap to keep and provide such a return if he hadn’t seen it with his own eyes!

By Thursday, everyone was tired and looking forward to the end of the show. We had entertained various members of the community with tea and somewhere to eat their sandwiches in the rain, and were considering various amendments for next year so that serious enquirers weren't put off coming in. We were extremely grateful for the support from members from Scotland throughout the week, thanks to Margaret and Willie Thomson, Tricia and Iain McKay, and Betty and Ritchie Thomson. Many thanks also to all the members of HCCW who visited during the show and gave a hand, especially those who were showing themselves and operated on the "change is as good as a rest" principle. I am continually amazed at the amount of knowledge and expertise that is available in the course of conversation at events like this: if I could only remember half of it I would be laughing.

Special thanks to Hazel, who organised the stand and travelled through the night at least one way, abandoning her new husband for the week in the process.

*Liz McCombe*

## **Chepstow Show**

The weather was beautiful, a complete change from last year's rain and gloom. We loaded the "show team", Fioled and Nina, and made the showground in good time. The girls had been washed and polished and managed to remain clean during the journey (always a bonus). We were next to the Gloucester cattle in the lines: this rare breed has pretty and distinctive markings, with a white stripe down their backs, white tail and short horns. King John, the bull, was unfortunately placed next to Nina and instantly started showing interest, so we changed her with Fioled, three months in calf and with bigger horns.

Showing was against the Welsh Black and they won, but Fioled came second, with the Gloucester heifer third in a class of four. It was nice to see (one) more breeds in the class than last year, but as ever the Highlands had the highest number of visitors and photo opportunities, which they loved. TV and the press came calling, and Fioled preened and was very well behaved! All in all, another very successful show, apart from the hairy moment when the blonde bull made a break for it on the way to the parade, and yours truly found Nina (a yearling) hiding behind her with the bull hot on the trail. Not my favourite moment, but I live to tell the tale!

*Liz McCombe*

## **Aberystwyth Show**

This show is rather like the Lampeter show, a cross between a town and a county show. It was a scorching day and Geoff Spawton accompanied by Mike Redwick Jones both got soundly sunburned in the process of winning the beef Championship with Morag Eve 1st of the May. The show is worth cultivating so that we can establish classes there as it joins north and south Wales. Any takers for next year?

*Annie May*

## **Lampeter Show**

As we were by now seasoned veterans of at least four shows, we looked forward to Friday, 14<sup>th</sup> August with great anticipation. At last, an opportunity to show our cattle in competition with other Highlands in Highland classes rather than in the “any other native beast” category.

At an indecently early hour we loaded Fioled, our three year old heifer, and Nina, fifteen months, into the trailer for the lengthy drive to Lampeter for the Show. The weather was dry, another bonus this summer, and we hoped the girls would only require last minute titivating when we arrived.

Lampeter is a small friendly agricultural show, and as we arrived we saw the rest of the entries having the excesses of the journey washed off and final touches put to their coats and dossans. The May and Celyn folds were well represented with five beasts each, as were Gilden Vale with three animals. Dafydd Morgans had brought his black bull, so with our two there were sixteen Highlanders altogether. The beasts all rose to the occasion, looking magnificent: I think all of them were show hardy, having had several outings during the summer. The judge was Mr Robin Chilton, who certainly had his work cut out, particularly as the ring was divided in order that other classes could continue simultaneously. However, there was no barrier, and the other classes had to cross the highlands as they paraded in front of the judge. It was quite difficult to spot the highlands at times, and Angie Handley almost won the young handler class outright!

We returned home late, tired but happy with our second and third rosettes, won under “proper” conditions. The girls galloped down the field to tell the others all about fame and fortune, then collapsed for a good rest the next day. Fioled has been reunited with the bull: when last seen each was taking it in turn to lick the other on the neck!

*Liz McCombe*



## Usk Show

The weather was beautiful for our debut at Usk Show. After two years of problems with blue tongue and flooding, the show was definitely going ahead and the sun was very welcome. Once again Nina trotted into the



*Other Native Breeds Class at Usk*

trailer, closely followed by Fioled champing at the bit, anxious not to be left behind. They genuinely seem to enjoy their outings to meet the public and *love* the photo opportunities!

We eventually arrived in the lines to find ourselves next to a couple of large Herefords (fortunately not a bull). The girls settled in and final priming got under way. With Welsh Black, British Blue, Hereford and Highland sharing a class, judging was difficult: the Welsh Black won after much deliberation. Dairy cattle were shown in their own ring and were judged by a charming Irishman who obviously loved his task! He explained the reasons for his decisions clearly and concisely, and the debriefing sounded useful to all the competitors. It was sad that the beef ring didn't have a microphone, but the classes were smaller.

Our girls attracted much attention, allowing small children to clamber over them and prod their dossans whilst cudding placidly in the sunshine. We intervened when one small boy attempted to wake Fioled up by shaking her by the horn, but she took no notice at all. He tried the same thing with the Hereford next door and was soundly butted!

We arrived home in the evening exhausted having had a successful day, satisfied that the girls had done us proud again. On her return Fioled galloped down the field to meet up with the bull who looked a bit surprised to see her. However, he soon recognised the strange white beast as his pal Fioled, and the two of them are once again inseparable.

With thanks to Fiona Park, who helped with the preparation the day before the show.

*Liz McCombe*

## LETTERS

*Julian Ford relaxes at the  
Celyn Fold visit*



**Dear Becky,**

*Just to thank you for such a lovely relaxed and interesting Fold visit on the 22nd August. It was lovely to see the beautiful surroundings of the Celyn Fold and the fitting terrain that your Highlanders graze. They all looked in blooming condition. A picnic lunch was an inspiration. We were all able to chat while we munched away in the sun by the stream while your Highland Cattle played hide and seek with hardy souls who were prepared to follow them up the hills and among the trees. Geoff and I were sorry to have had to leave early, as the rest of you were on your way further up the mountain and the view from the top of all the cattle and the valley must have been spectacular. Thanks once more and we look forward to more fold visits in the future.*

*Geoff and Annie*

### **Bovine TB**

We refer to Annie's comments 'You may or may not agree' in the Spring newsletter. This is a very complex issue and we are concerned there may be vested interests manipulating the system. Just consider all those who are doing well financially out of the existing 'crisis' and wish to see the existing procedures maintained. This is at the expense of many people who are suffering greatly as a direct result of the existing bovine TB policy. Having suffered, at first hand the failings of DEFRA's policies and procedures, we have had cause to research the bovine TB issue over the last two years. We are very concerned that the badger is being used as a convenient scapegoat

to keep people's minds off the real issues. It is absolutely ridiculous to have to wait 20 years to see if any cull is successful. When you consider that DEFRA's advice (see *Dealing with Bovine TB in your herd*' booklet) to farmers regarding the disposal of milk from inconclusive and reactors (which can't be used for human consumption) is to mix it with slurry and spread it on the land (ideal foraging for all kinds of wildlife), where any TB bacteria can then survive in the soil for up to four months), is it therefore surprising that some badgers are now infected with TB? Despite million of pounds being spent on research there is still uncertainty as to how the disease is spread but milk is a known source of infection – it was what caused so many people to contract the disease before milk was pasteurized and was why testing of cattle was introduced in the first place!

Let's not forget that despite the huge increase in so called herd 'breakdowns', the risk to humans from bovine TB has not increased and is still extremely rare (even among testers and cattle owners!). Even the Health Protection Agency says the risks from bovine TB are 'negligible'. The dictionary definition of 'negligible' is 'so small, trifling, unimportant that it may safely be neglected or disregarded'. We are not seeing mass numbers of animals with any physical signs of the disease either – and it can affect most mammal species. How do we know that other animals may turn out to be more of a risk than the badger? For example, there are currently well over 1 million feral and 7.5 million domestic pet cats, compared with around 300,000 badgers. It is known that cats are carriers and may pose more of a risk as they can drink raw milk from dairy cows and live in close proximity to herds.

Maybe cattle owners should now unite and ask whether the whole TB issue is being blown up out of all proportion? It is currently a system designed to protect exports rather than the health and welfare of humans and animals. Farmers and cattle owners are at the brunt of the existing system, which is causing extreme hardship and distress to many, particularly where animals fail the test, are slaughtered and then no evidence of any TB is found on the carcass or following tissue culture. The existing skin test has not changed much since it was first introduced. It should be noted that it merely indicates that the animal has mounted an immune response capable of recognising *M. bovis* and does not conclude actual infection. This means that animals identified as reactors or inconclusive reactors may have been exposed to a bacterium that can cause TB at some point in their life (or have been vaccinated!). The skin test has proven to be unreliable in many cases and DEFRA does not provide proper scientific back up for its reliability claims. It is time consuming and has significant health and safety risks, as well as animal welfare issues, particularly for those who have small non-commercial herds where animals are not handled regularly and who cannot afford sophisticated handling equipment.

It is absolutely appalling that, despite millions of pounds of investment over many years, a vaccine is still not approved for cattle. The main stumbling block would seem to be because the existing skin testing regime could not continue as vaccinated animals would all show up as reactors! EU legislation is being blamed but legislation can be amended to reflect changing circumstances. Surely if an animal is vaccinated

the skin test could discontinue or are too many people going to lose money if this happens? We strongly believe that cattle owners should be grouping together and fighting for a right to vaccinate their cattle against TB and for this to be implemented as a matter of urgency and the controversial and outdated skin testing to be phased out.

Keith and Sally Hall

Keith and Sally have said that they feel so strongly about this issue and the negative effects and financial hardship it is causing many farmers, that they would be happy to come along to any meeting to talk about/discuss what they have found out. If you would like HCCW to arrange such a talk, please let Liz or Mo know.

### **The Economics of Badger Culling**

Is badger culling an economically viable way to contribute to the control of bTB in cattle?

Professor John McInnery (part of the Independent Scientific Group set up by DEFRA) looked at the economics of badger culling. It costs £20,000,000 annually just to look for Bovine TB (50,000 herds containing 4.5 million cattle tested), when it is found it costs £60,000,000 of further expense (2,000 confirmed herds @ approx £27,000 per herd & 1,500 unconfirmed incidents costing on average £5,400) and over the period 1998-2007 it has cost £70,000,000 in research to try to understand it. The question studied was 'if badgers are the cause of some of the 2,000 breakdowns, how much would culling badgers reduce the number of breakdowns and would it be worth it' and 'how much would other control methods reduce breakdowns and would they be worth it?'. The calculations are based on a culling program across a 100kmsq region. For reactive culling, herd breakdowns would be predicted to increase by 22%, so would not be worthwhile due to negative benefits and significant costs. In a proactive culling over 25,000 acres, herd breakdowns would be predicted to decline by 25% over five years. Two questions arise, the first being what did it cost to prevent these 25% and what was the cause of the other 75% and might it be more sensible to target the dominant cause? Based on the results from the Randomised Badger Culling Trial, proactive culling over 5 years would prevent 11.6 breakdowns in the 100kmsq area and each breakdown avoided saves the economy £27,000. Therefore the economic benefits from a culling program amount to £313,200. Costs of cage trapping equate to £3,800 per km<sup>2</sup> per year and assuming 75% landowner permission, total costs equate to £1,425,000, which means a cost of £123,000 per breakdown avoided, which cannot be economically justified. However in the culled area, breakdowns in the culled area will reduce by 25%, but breakdowns are increased by 25% in the 2km zone surrounding the culled area. Therefore the net effect of culling badgers is a reduction of 1.4 breakdowns after 5 years - an economic benefit of £37,800 against an expenditure of £1,425,000. This confers benefit on the very few farmers who avoid badger based breakdowns and impose direct economic costs on neighbouring farmers, represent an enhanced threat to all and offer little benefit to

taxpayers. If cheaper methods were used such as gassing or snaring which have costs of £2,400 per km<sup>2</sup> per year - total cost £900,000, or culling by farmers at £1,000 per km per year - total cost £375,000 over five years, these are still not economically viable. Even if farmers could cull at 80% of the cost (£300,000) and ignored the effects on their neighbours, it would still not be worth it to them, as only 30% of breakdown costs saved (£94,000) are farmer borne costs. **Therefore these simple calculations indicate that there seems to be no economic justification for badger culling as a method of controlling Bovine TB and it is difficult to envisage circumstances where badger culling would be an economically justifiable approach.**

Even if the proportion of badgers culled was to be increased, badger immigration into culled areas could mean that an increase in capture rate would lead to equivalent increase in population reduction and the detrimental edge effects would be expected. Assuming culling over large areas (300km<sup>2</sup>+), modest overall benefits could be generated but this would involve detrimental effects on an enormous number of farms, the economic costs would still greatly exceed the benefits, there would be compliance issues with the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife. Reactive culling has the same problems as proactive culling whether done by farmers or others as it would contribute to increasing incidence and spread of Bovine TB. Test and slaughter of infected badgers is not an option, as there are no reliable tests currently available to detect *Mycobacterium bovis* infection in live badgers.

So what should the Welsh Assembly Government be doing?

They should be now implementing detailed control measures directed at cattle, with the overall objective of halting and reversing the upward trend in herd breakdown incidence. This strategy would be based on the conclusion that significant numbers of infected animals are not detected by the Tuberculin skin test. There should be a classification of farms as high or low risk, with the prohibition of animal movements from high to low risk farms. In low risk areas the objective would be maintenance of a disease free state (eradication) and in high risk areas, as eradication in the short term would be unrealistic, the objective would be reduction of the level of infection and prevention of spread. In low risk areas, there would be stricter cattle movement controls, combined use of the tuberculin skin and IFN- $\mu$  test and slaughter of groups of herds with a record of persistent infection, and a shorter testing interval. High risk areas would have strict cattle movement controls; in herds with new infections the aim would be to eliminate the infection in the herd. In herds with a history of infection, there would be rigorous skin testing including tuberculin and IFN- $\mu$  test, limited periods of herd restriction, restricted movement of cattle and slaughter of persistently infected groups of herds, with annual testing of all herds.

Charles Morgan

## Virtual Show

I would like to invite you to participate in the 2009 Virtual Highland Cattle Show. the site is at <http://www.virtualcattleshow.com> The show is independent of all societies but is seeking support societies but is seeking support of

sponsorship to sponsor classes. We have 3 International judges. Susan Boland from Australia, Sue is a past President of the Australian Highland cattle Society and breeder of a number of Australian Champions. the 2nd judge is Mr Malcolm Moy head stud manager of Pollock Fold, Glasgow Scotland, and our 3rd judge is Mr Eddie McKay Past President of the American Highland cattle Society. Co organisers to this event include Noelene Gallagher from NZ who organised the New Zealand Virtual Show, Nicola Almoosa who organised the Welsh leg of the UK Virtual Show and myself. I am a past President of the Australian Highland Society and organised the Australian Virtual show. Entry to the show is free, and any prizes will depend on sponsorship. Hoping for your support,

Kind regards Trevor Perry

## FOR SALE AND WANTED

Advertisements are free to members, so if you have any livestock, equipment, other items or services for sale or wanted, please use this space. Sales and Wants are also listed on the website: [hccw.org.uk](http://hccw.org.uk)  
Please send items for the next issue to Mo Morgan by 15th January 2010.

### Black bull calf for sale

1 year old black bull calf (entire)  
Contact: Paul and Marie Carson  
Tel. no. 01685 881209



### BULL WANTED

New members, Emma and Ivor Simpkins from Caio near Llanwrda would like to hire or borrow a bull for their five heifers next year. If you can help, please contact them on 01558 650441 or email: [simpkinsemma@hotmail.com](mailto:simpkinsemma@hotmail.com)

WATERWYNCH - Home of the Rowston Fold  
Stock include Torloisk, Killochries, The May.  
Naturally reared on 250 acres at Marros Mountain, West Wales.  
SA certified. IBR, BVD, Lepto and Johnes accredited.

**Enquiries: Dai Ormond: 07831 111896**

[www.waterwynch.co.uk](http://www.waterwynch.co.uk)

**For Sale** - CATTLE CRUSH suitable for highland cattle. This is an adapted crush to give better clearance for the horns. We have used it for 4 years and would suit a small fold. £300.00 Call Peter 07966 417585 or 01886 884870.

**Young Stock Bull For Sale** - ANGUS RIABHACH 1ST OF ABERSKY



Born 20/04/2006  
Herdbook Number  
PWC060003  
UK Ministry Tag  
UK311179 200003

This gentle young registered bull has produced excellent calves; the young stock can be viewed. He is halter trained and easily handled.

Colour - Brindle with good pedigree please view database.

Reasonably priced as replacement has been arranged

Call 07966 417585 or email [chalk@gwi.net](mailto:chalk@gwi.net)

### **Yearling Heifers**

Two very pretty yearling heifers, fully halter-trained and easy to handle. Contact Mike & Liz on 01291 652957 or email [lizmccombe@btinternet.com](mailto:lizmccombe@btinternet.com)





## FOR SALE

### BULL CALVES

2 Bull calves, born 03/01/09. Red/yellow. Lovely coats on strong stretchy boys with cool temperaments. Will be easy to train and handle and will make powerful safe stock bulls.



### 3 YEAR OLD BLACK HEIFER

Subhlair Coireaman 2nd of The May. Running with black bull - Gille dubh 5th of Killochries. Interesting and rare blood lines, haltered and used to being handled.



### PURE BRED ORGANIC HIGHLAND STEERS

Used to wet bogland sites in summer and rough mountain foraging in winter. No hay, silage or concentrates or supplements. Prices from £350.00

**Telephone 01570 423080**

## COMMITTEE ADDRESS BOOK

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